

MIDWEST CENTER

FOR HEALTH SERVICES & POLICY RESEARCH

Meet Our New Director

Kevin B. Weiss, MD

Kevin Weiss, MD, MPH, MS joined VA in 2000 as Director of the Midwest Center for Health Services and Policy Research, a Center of Excellence located at Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital.

Dr. Weiss is also Senior Lecturer in Medicine at Northwestern University School of Medicine. He previously served as Associate Professor of Internal Medicine at the Rush Medical College and Director of the Center for Health Services Research at the Rush Primary Care Institute, Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago.

Dr. Weiss received his MD from the University of Health Sciences/Chicago Medical School in 1981, while at the same time earning a Master's in Physiology. He received his MPH in 1985 from the University of Illinois School of Public Health and a Master's in Health Services Administration in 1987 from the Harvard University School of Public Health.

A former Robert Wood Johnson Generalist Physician Faculty Scholar, Dr. Weiss also served as Associate Professor of Health Care Sciences and Medicine at the George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, DC and Research Fellow at the Center for Health Policy Research at George Washington University. Additionally, he has held positions at the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Dr. Weiss conducts collaborative epidemiological and health services research projects involving chronic care management, outcomes measurement, and quality improvement. He has published extensively in the field of respiratory illness with a focus on asthma.

In this issue:

- ✓ ***Meet our New Director***
- ✓ ***SCI Study funded***
- ✓ ***Call for new COEs***

and Health Services Research Centers of Excellence, as well as new research initiatives, particularly in the area of outcomes research in medical therapeutics.

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As Director of MCHSPR, Dr. Weiss plans to build upon the Center's long tradition of excellence in health services research both within and outside of VA. Over the next few years, Dr. Weiss will institute a number of new goals and initiatives for the Center, including increased interaction with affiliated universities in the Chicago area, collaboration with other VA hospitals

MCHSPR Gears Up For Annual Meeting

Investigators and staff members at MCHSPR are busily preparing posters, presentations, and workshop materials for the fast approaching 19th Annual Health Services Research and Development Service Meeting. The conference will be held at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington DC, February 14 – 16, 2001. The host for this year's meeting is the Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes, the Center of Excellence in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This year, many of our senior staff members will be active in the proceedings.

K. Weiss, F. Weaver and **K. Stroupe** from MCHSPR and **F. Cunningham** from the Pharmacy Benefits Management SHG are hosting a roundtable discussion on development of a research agenda in the area of Medical Therapeutics and Outcomes Research. This session will be held prior to the start of the annual meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 14, 2001; 2-5 pm at the Renaissance Hotel, Washington, D.C. Within this agenda, topics such as pharmacoeconomics, pharmacoepidemiology, and patient safety will be included.

D. Hynes and **K. Stroupe** will give an oral presentation entitled, "An Economic Analysis of Transurethral Surgery Compared to Watching Waiting and Pharmacologic Management for Moderately Symptomatic Benign Prostatic

Hyperplasia: Results from the Veterans Affairs Cooperative Study." **D. Cowper, F. Weaver,** and **D. Hynes** will each host a roundtable on VIREC, SCI QUERI, and VA HCFA Data Merge Initiative respectively. **D. Cowper** will also present, "Health Care Preferences and Choices of Gulf War Veterans in VISN 13," at the poster session.

Two workshops on the agenda are : (1) "Using a National Drug Utilization Database to Support Outcomes Research in the Department of Veterans Affairs," participants: **F. Cunningham, M. Valentino, L. Kazis, B. Smith, & D. Hynes**, sponsored by VIREC and PBM; and (2) "Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a Research Tool," participants: **D. Cowper, B. Ripley & J. Harar**, sponsored by VIREC. In addition, VIREC staff will be participating in a workshop on dSs entitled, "Using the VA Decision Support System (dSs) National Extracts," participants: **Wei Yu, H. Warren, P. Murphy, P. Lin, & P. Barnett. F. Weaver** will participate in a Workshop focused on QUERI efforts, "The VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI): The Nexus of Practice, Policy and Science." As in the last two years, VIREC will host the exhibit, "Products and Services of the VA Information Resource Center."

UTI in SCI Study Funded

A new study, "Pharmacological Management of Recurrent Urinary Tract Infections in SCI," has been funded by the American Paraplegia Society. The principal investigator on the grant is **Frances Weaver, PhD**, Deputy Director of MCHSPR and Research Coordinator of the Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) QUERI. Co-investigators on the study are: **Bernard Nemchausky, MD**, Chief of SCI at Hines VAH; **Sunil Sabharwal, MD**, Chief of SCI at Milwaukee VAMC, and **Jorge Parada, MD, MPH**, Senior Research Associate at MCHSPR. The purpose of this study is to add to the body of evidence concerning the management of recurrent Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) in individuals with SCI. Specifically, a retrospective record review will be conducted to look at

variation in treatment of recurrent UTI. Administrative databases including pharmacy, laboratory, inpatient, and outpatient files will be used to identify SCI patients with a primary or secondary diagnosis of UTI at two VA facilities. Analyses will include examination of treatment strategies, (i.e., type of drug and duration and variation in treatment by laboratory findings, type of bladder management, and whether or not a patient has recurrent UTIs). The high frequency of UTI in the SCI population results in high health care costs and poor quality of life. The ultimate objective of this study is to identify and implement best practices for UTI prevention and management in the SCI population.

HSR&D Issues RFP For New Centers

Health Services Research and Development Service in Headquarters has released a targeted solicitation of proposals for one to two new Centers of Excellence (COE). The opportunity to apply for a COE is open to all medical facilities in Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) that do not currently have a COE. In this round, the themes of interest to HSR&D include: minority health and health disparities, rural health, translational research,

organizational and policy research, and decision support systems. Other thematic areas are invited, but must be well justified. The deadline to notify Headquarters of the intent to submit a proposal was January 15, 2001 and the full proposal is due March 27, 2001. Copies of this RFP and other HSR&D, QUERI and Nursing Research Initiative announcements are available on the VA web site at: <http://www.va.gov/resdev/fr/frrfp/sols2.htm>.

IIR Funding Limit Changes

Effective immediately, **new** Investigator Initiated Research (IIR) project proposals may request up to 5 years of funding, and are no longer subject to a preset funding limit. As mentioned in the HSR&D Hotline call 1/8/01, HSR&D Service instituted this change to bring HSR&D IIRs in line with R-01 projects funded by the National Institutes of Health and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The changes provide VA investigators with added flexibility but also emphasize investigators' responsibility to design projects efficiently and ensure that budget requests are well justified. This adjustment applies only to regular IIR proposals.

QUERI Annual Meeting Held January 10-12, 2001

The annual QUERI meeting was held January 10-12, 2001 in Reston, VA. The theme for this fourth annual meeting was, "Developing an Infrastructure for Translation." The purpose of the QUERI annual meeting is to bring together the Executive Committees and members of the eight Coordinating Centers to focus on several issues including the current implementation of individual translation plans, impact measurement, and the continued development of organizational infrastructure to support translation activities. The meeting provides an opportunity for QUERI leaders and participants to discuss a broad array of important crosscutting issues affecting the QUERI process. The QUERI annual meeting was an invitation only meeting primarily for QUERI committees and QUERI investigators. This year, each QUERI presented their translation plans to the group and a distinguished panel that included: Thomas Garthwaite, MD, Undersecretary for Health; John Feussner, MD, MPH, Chief, Research & Development Officer, Chief, Cooperative Studies Program; John G. Demakis, MD, Director, Health Services Research & Development Service, and Jonathan Perlin, MD, PhD, MPH, Chief Performance and Quality Officer.

HSR&D Announces New REAPs Available

HSR&D Service is interested in promoting and supporting groups of VA HSR&D investigators located at VA Medical Centers that do not contain and are not affiliated with an HSR&D Center of Excellence (COE). The HSR&D Research Enhancement Award Program, or "REAP," was created to increase HSR&D capacity by assisting VA sites that already have a history of HSR&D peer reviewed research and career development funding. Funds provided under the REAP are for the creation of a core program of investigators and staff to support and facilitate the development of HSR&D research projects and the training and mentoring of new HSR&D investigators. Deadline for receipt of applications is February 23, 2001. Proposals will be reviewed in March, and results announced by April 1, 2001. Inquiries may be directed to Jay A. Freedman, Ph.D. at 202-408-3662, e-mail: jay.freedman@mail.va.gov.

Holiday Party Brings Cheer

The HSR&D/ CSPCC Holiday Party was once again a great success due to the hard work of **Gay Watkins** and her busy elves. The weather outside was frightful with falling snow and freezing temperatures. But, inside it was delightful! A catered luncheon buffet was served to over 50 people in the auditorium. Appetizers and desserts were brought in by attendees and, as always, were plentiful. Recorded music was provided during lunch and, afterward, Gay arranged to have the Hines Day Care Carolers make a live appearance. Their youthful voices and adorable stage show made everyone smile. Employees of the two departments (HSR&D and CSP) were even caught singing along! The afternoon concluded with a "steal your partner's grab bag," but in the end, everyone who participated received a present.

All of us at
MCHSPR
wish you and
yours
best wishes
for the New
Year.

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Dr. Kevin Weiss has joined MCHSPR as our new Director. He is settling into his new office surroundings, and we are thrilled he is here (see page 1). Welcome Dr. Weiss!

MCHSPR would also like to welcome the following people to the Center: George Joseph to the QUERI and VIREC staff, Phil Colin, Sam Manivong and Joanne McNeill to the VIREC staff. We welcome all of you.

Mike Kerr, Mary Jo Lopez, and Veronica Romero have resigned their MCHSPR and VIREC appointments. We wish them good luck in their future endeavors.

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